

REGULAR MEETING OF THE JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL
February 23, 2016

The Jasper County Council met this date at 7:00 P.M. C.S.T. in the Commissioners' Room, Suite 202, of the Jasper County Courthouse located at 115 West Washington Street, Rensselaer, Indiana, with the following members present: Rein O. Bontreger, Gerrit H. DeVries, John T. Price, Gary Fritts, Stephen Jordan and Paul Norwine. Let the record show that Andrew Andree was absent. Also present was Donna J. Horner, Deputy Auditor, and Linda Armstrong, Deputy Auditor. Mr. Bontreger called the meeting to order and those present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Stephen Jordan.

MINUTES: Mr. Norwine made the motion to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on January 19, 2016. Mr. Jordan seconded and the motion carried.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION / COUNTY IDENTITY SECURITY PROTECTION FUND: Advertised in the County Identity Security Protection Fund, Other Services & Charges, Microfilm Conversion was \$18,300.00. Beth Warren, Recorder, has stated per letter that this amount will be used for the microfilm conversion project. Mr. DeVries made the motion to approve **Ordinance No. 2016-02A** as advertised. Mr. Price seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION / EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BUDGET: Advertised in the County General Fund, Emergency Management Budget, Supplies, Fuel Allowance was \$1,000.00. Mr. Price made the motion to approve **Ordinance No. 2016-02B** as advertised. Mr. Fritts seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION / ELECTED OFFICIAL TRAINING FUND: Advertised in the Elected Official Training Fund, Other Services & Charges, Continued Education Training was \$8,500.00. Mr. Norwine made the motion to approve **Ordinance No. 2016-02C** as advertised. Mr. Jordan seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

JASPER COUNTY AIRPORT / UPDATE: Brad Cozza, Airport Manager, was present to give an update on the past year and a look ahead into 2016. Mr. Cozza stated that they were very pleased to see a 45% increase in the sale of aviation gasoline. Once again, we saw a drop in jet fuel sales from 2014 to 2015. This can be contributed most significantly to the drop in corn prices that greatly diminished the demand for aerial application work over the summer. In regards to hanger rent, we are still working with our engineers on plans and anticipate coming back to you before too long regarding T-Hangar development. Overall, total revenue was up 11%. The airport recently launched their first ever website in it's over 80-year history. Looking ahead, Mr. Cozza reported that they did receive a grant last fall for the fuel farm project which is on track to occur yet this spring. The last thing is navigational aid improvements and pilot controlled lighting. We are currently working on utilizing our pilot controlled lighting to its fullest potential. The goal is to have the lights go off after 15 minutes of inactivity. Based on a conservative estimate, 25% reduction in use would save approximately \$1,000.00 annually in terms of maintenance and energy costs. Mr. Cozza explained that the fuel farm funds are a combination of an FAA grant, state match, and the remainder is shared within our funds. Mr. DeVries asked if any other grants were being sought to build hangers? Is that a possibility? Mr. Cozza replied that it is not a possibility on hangers because it is considered a revenue generated project.

LOIT DISCUSSION / AGENDA ITEM: Mr. Bontreger stated that the LOIT discussion will become part of our advertised agenda beginning next month.

HOSPITAL / EMPLOYEE CONVERAGE: Mr. Price reported that the hospital is talking with our insurance carrier to work out a way to have in-network coverage at the hospital and also at Franciscan's facility located in DeMotte for the county employees. We want to do it in a way that will be in-network for the employees but not an additional cost for the county.

FROST LAW: Mr. Price congratulated the Commissioners on the frost ordinance. Mr. Price stated that he has spoken with Attorney Beaver and he is very close to having it worked out where we will be able to enforce the law with citations or tickets by the Sheriff's department instead of having to file an expensive lawsuit. I think they did a terrific job in handling that in a way that is not going to be an undue burden on people who need to use the roads but at the same time protect them.

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SB 308 / FARMGROUND VALUATION: Steve Jordan reported that the House Ways and Means Committee will consider SB 308 (farmground valuation) tomorrow at 11:30 a.m. Further discussion followed.

TOURISM REPORT / 2015: Sheila Schroeder, Economic Development Organization, distributed and reviewed the Tourism Report for 2015. The Tourism Commission is funded with the 5% Innkeepers Tax. The lodging options will be increasing by one with the addition of Comfort Suites in the late spring. Mr. Jordan announced that the Fair Board would be providing fireworks with the assistance of the Tourism Commission this year on July 2.

Katie Holderby was also present to speak in regards to the Tourism Commission's partnership with South Shore. Ms. Holderby stated that they just completed their second year with JCTC. The South Shore will be promoting five festivals once again this year. These festivals include Remington Water Tower Days, Touch of Dutch, Rock the Arts, Little Cousin Jasper Festival, and the Sandhill Crane Festival. In addition, all of our attractions that we featured this year on Savor Indiana, a PBS Broadcast, were in Jasper and Newton Counties. Mr. Bontreger stated that two other events that he feels would merit being included would be the fly-in at the airport and Cruise Night. Both of these events are held on the same day. Cruise Night has been taking place for over 30 years and is one of the biggest nights in Rensselaer.

LOIT / DISCUSSION: Mr. DeVries stated that, as he mentioned at last month's meeting, we have two major issues that affect the pocketbooks of our families here in Jasper County. One is the third highest county income tax in the state and the other is the farmland property tax assessment formula that's causing an enormous rise in the tax on farmland. I suggested that together we begin to address these two issues well before August or September. The Local Option Income Tax has been a major interest to me since I ran for the Council in 2008 and I have probably been the most vocal in the efforts to reduce this high rate of income tax that came into being through the Council of 2007. I would like to see a better balance between the income tax and the property tax and so I will continue to push this year for a further reduction in this county income tax; however, there is a new development in the works and that is HB 1485. Indiana has adopted legislation repealing the CAGIT (County Adjusted Gross Income Tax), the COIT (County Option Income Tax), the CEDIT (County Economic Development Income Tax), and the various local income taxes with special purposes and projects and combining them all into a single local income tax with three rate components. Jasper County is a CAGIT and a CEDIT county. The existing local taxes are repealed effective January 1, 2017 and the taxes in effect on May 1, 2016 will be consolidated into this new law. The information states "as part of the transition to the new structure, a county may not adopt any ordinances under the former taxes after June 30, 2016. Counties that collect more than one kind of income tax will have to consolidate those into a single tax with separate rate components. Those three components are an expenditure rate, a property tax relief rate, and a special purpose rate. How might this effect the Jail Special CAGIT that was also adopted in 2006? This is something that we will have to get some details on because it sounds like any type of CAGIT will be put into this place. This would also mean that if any changes are to be made in the income tax rate, we must make a determination no later than our council meeting of June 21 as to reduction or keeping the rates the same for the three LOITs. Mr. Price stated that when the jail is paid off, there will no longer be a Jail Special CAGIT but we could reduce the rate and not have to mess with LOIT B that year, right? Mr. Bontreger stated that in talking with the DLGF representative, it's suggested that even if we were to pay the jail off in 2017, we're going to need to leave that rate in place another year to make sure that we have funds available before we decide to reduce that rate. Mr. DeVries stated that I think we have even discussed keeping at least part of that to take care of the maintenance. Mr. Bontreger stated that what we need to consider is if we pay the whole thing off, where does that leave our reserves or do we prepay some principal and save some money that way even if we don't pay it completely off?

Mr. DeVries stated that with the passage of HB 1110, Jasper County will be receiving a distribution from the county's local income tax account. Under this bill, a majority of this local income tax revenue which has been held in reserve by the state would be returned to local governments. This will amount to \$9,190,000.00 to be used here in Jasper County. That's how much money we're going to be getting for our specific needs as determined by the fiscal body of each county. Mr. Jordan stated that the county will receive approximately \$5.7 million after the distributions are made to the cities and towns. Of this, 75% has to go to roads. The remaining 25% can also go to roads or it can be used otherwise.

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AIRPORT AUTHORITY BOARD / NEW APPOINTMENTS: Brad Cozza, Airport Manager, reported that they will be welcoming two new board members beginning in March. The new appointments will bring the number of board members to five (5).

There being no further business, Mr. Jordan made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Norwine seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Rein O. Bontreger, President

ATTEST:

Kimberly K. Grow, Auditor of Jasper County

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